



# The Harbinger

Newsletter of the Illinois Native Plant Society

FALL 2023  
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"...dedicated to the study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and natural communities of Illinois."



Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*) has a burst of red foliage in autumn in the black oak savanna at Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve in Will County. Native plants with colorful leaves such as these are great alternatives to invasive plants like the Winged Wahoo (*Euonymus alatus*). Photo by Chris Benda.

## In This Issue

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President's Message • Welcome New Members • INPS News  
*Isotria medeoloides* Discovery in Illinois • Field Trip Report  
Other News & Web Links • Botany Humor



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## Message from the President

The Annual Gathering held September 29, 30 and October 1 and hosted by the Central Chapter was a grand time for all attendees. Central did a fine job hosting and the field trips offered a range of sites for members. The featured speaker, Doug Tallamy, always delivers an inspiring message. The duties to host in 2024 go to the Northeast Chapter. Keep an eye out next year for a save-the-date announcement. This membership meeting is the best way to learn in the field from many of the talented botanists in the INPS.

Please be on the alert for a message seeking new board members. We have several wonderful people serving as board officers leaving after giving much time and work. And we are looking for a few more at-large board members. The official solicitations will be going out to all members via email and we will have notices on social media, also.

The Governing Board will be restructuring our donations and gifts page on our website to make it easier to have the Illinois Native Plant Society be part of legacy giving, gifts of professional services or retirement fund disbursements that can assist your deductions at the end of the year. Formal announcements will be made in November.

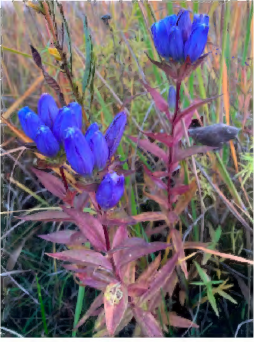
In preparing for all the announcements, the Governing Board feels we could use photographs that show the beauty of our native plants and natural areas. Look for a contest announcement about this soon.

In short, as the autumnal season progresses and we celebrate fall colors, the beauty of dried seed heads and the cries of sandhill cranes overhead, get out and enjoy fall, pumpkin-spice cappuccino optional. I am so lucky to live east of the Des Plaines River in Joliet. As some sandhills follow the river south, the cranes wheel about over my neighborhood as they get their bearings for Jasper-Pulaski State Park in Indiana and correct course to the south east. For me this is one of the best parts of fall.

Janine Catchpole  
President



## Message from the Editor



It's been a beautiful autumn this year in Illinois and particularly at my home in Jackson County. The leaves this year seem more colorful and warm weather through most of October made being outside wonderful. I had a chance to stop by Loda Cemetery Prairie, a beautiful remnant managed by Grand Prairie Friends in the town of Loda, Illinois, to see some Gentians. I hope you enjoy this issue and as always, let me know if you are interested in contributing an article for a future issue.

Christopher David Benda - Editor



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## Welcome New Members

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Leah Williams  
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Kathryn McKean

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Denise Butenschoen  
Shirley Droese



### INPS 2024 Grant Applications Available in Late November

Students, citizen scientists, and conservation groups are invited to consider applying for an INPS Research Grant for up to \$3,000 to fund one-year projects. This grant is for research studies on Illinois native plants such as life history, reproductive biology, demography, genetics, comparative site inventories, or habitat ecology; research on threats to native plants and communities, such as invasive species, are acceptable. Laboratory research on native plants, as well as projects focused on research relating to education about or restoration of native plants or communities are also eligible.

INPS will continue its second grant in 2024: the Survey Grant. This grant for up to \$5,000 will fund searches for Illinois Endangered, Threatened or several rare plant species of conservation concern for which current data is inadequate to assess their status and for which field surveys, and recovery recommendations, are needed. INPS worked with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to develop a priority list of species for the Survey Grant. Experienced botanical field surveyors, either independent or associated with an institution, are invited to apply for this grant. Partnerships are encouraged.

Full grant application details and forms will be posted on-line by late November. Check our website at [illinoisplants.org/grants](https://illinoisplants.org/grants).

Applications are due by January 31, 2024. Awards will be announced by March 31, 2024.

### 2023 Annual Gathering Recap

Another successful INPS Annual Gathering is in the books! Over 150 people gathered in Springfield for this year's event! The weekend included presentations from grant recipients, field trips to nine great locations, an inspiring keynote presentation from Dr. Doug Tallamy, and of course, a chance to catch up with old friends and to make new connections. Links to recorded presentations are below, along with a few field trip highlights.

A huge thanks to every who volunteered their time to make this event possible, especially the Central Chapter president, Trish Quintenz! If you missed out this time, note that the Northeast Chapter will be hosting next year's annual gathering (date TBD). You can view Dr. Tallamy's talk on "[The Nature of Oaks](#)" online and read about even more field trip highlights on [Facebook](#)!





## View Recordings from the 2023 Annual Gathering

All videos can be found on the [Central Chapter INPS Vimeo page](#).

- Dr. Doug Tallamy's talk **"The Nature of Oaks"**
- Ingrid Felsl's talk **"Where the Buffalo Clover Roam: Preferred Microsite Characteristics of *Trifolium reflexum* L. in Illinois"**
- Samantha Berk's talk **"The Role Graminoids Play in Prairie Ecosystem Functioning"**
- Ali Touloupas's talk **"Documenting the Current Distribution, Potential Threats, and Climate Vulnerability of Two Illinois Rare Species"**
- Noah Pyles's talk **"Root Microbial Communities in Illinois *Spiranthes* Orchids"**

### Field trip to Revis Hill Prairie *shared by Floyd Catchpole*

It was a beautiful day to see Revis Hill Prairie, one of the largest and best hill prairies in Illinois. The hike to the top showed a great view of the valley and Lou Nelms discussed the formation of the hill prairie by fine glacial silt deposits on top of a glacial Moraine next to the outwash plain of the Salt Creek/Sangamon River Valley. He also talked about how the flood from the Kankakee Torrent backed water onto the lower slopes of Revis. What a sight that must have been.

I've known Revis since the 1980's and my old friend isn't as healthy as she used to be. One of the main culprits is Bambi and her friends. Once Revis was covered by tens of thousands of pale purple coneflowers (*Echinacea pallida*). I remember the shock when Vern LaGesse told me that the Ottoe Skipper butterflies (*Hesperia ottoe*) that once danced over Revis by the thousands were gone. I asked him how this happened and he told me that the deer ate all the *Echinacea* flowers on the prairie, depriving the butterflies of food. Sure enough, this trip revealed only a few areas with modest amounts of *Echinacea* and Lou told us that the prairie dandelions (*Microseris cuspidata*) had retreated to a ridgetop and the unusually vivid pink shooting stars of Revis (*Dodecatheon meadia* × hybrid??) were also hiding from the deer in smaller patches. So, if you hunt or know a hunter, please ask them to hunt near nature preserves and take as many does as possible. For the love of nature.





## Special Trees of Menard and Sangamon Counties shared by Guy Sternberg

Our tree tour took off from the hotel promptly at 8:20, with 28 participants crammed into a caravan of six vehicles. We had designated drivers and designated navigators as well as phone operators. It was a minor miracle, and due to the determination of all involved, that no one got lost!

We saw the Illinois Champion *Magnolia acuminata* first (our only native magnolia in Illinois), then headed north to see an 1821 *Catalpa speciosa* and do some off-roading to some very exciting pioneer and Lincoln history, preserved and protected on private property that we had permission to visit. Access to private land would be a mainstay for much of our day, allowing us to see many sites that were not open to the general public.

Moving northwest into Menard County, we continued our access privileges on private land, visiting a historic *Castanea dentata* in Athens and then off-roading again to the remains of the tree we call the Last Prairie Sentinel, an aboriginal trail marker tree, just south of Athens. That special tree has been propagated and named 'Pathfinder' and has received a full Native American traditional blessing involving representatives of many tribes. We traveled on to see the recent grave of the man who had owned and saved the tree, and then across the same cemetery to the historic grave of one of the most notable botanists in the history of our state, Elihu Hall (1822-1882). From there, we drove only a few minutes to visit the house where Hall had lived, also seeing some of the original trees he had planted there. We were met by the current owner, who took our group photo in front of the historic house for us and gave us some Hall History.

Then it was on to Petersburg. We made a brief stop at Riverbank Lodge to learn about the Riverbank Oak (*Quercus × warei*), then moved farther west to Oakland Cemetery to see two of the largest trees of their kind in Illinois (*Liriodendron tulipifera* and *Catalpa bignonioides*) and some very famous graves (Ann Rutledge and Edgar Lee Masters). We talked among ourselves about the scenic history, both human and arboreal, as we gulped down our lunches.



Our group at the old courthouse where Abraham Lincoln tried his first case as an official circuit-court lawyer



6 *Liriodendron tulipifera*



Racing the clock, we trained north into a very rural part of this very rural county. The entire caravan dropped into low gear and we off-roaded once more, along a private waterway to a much older cemetery where most of Lincoln's contemporary friends had been laid to rest. Among them we saw the real (original) grave of Ann Rutledge, interred there many decades before a ceremonial relocation of a bit of the remains to the newer grave we had seen at Oakland. Just up the road from there we found the Lincoln Trail mulberry, a picturesque compact hybrid of *Morus rubra* and *Morus alba*. Further along, we came to the Illinois champion *Quercus marilandica* and a spectacular hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) near the north boundary of the county.

We had two hours left—still right on schedule! Zooming back south toward civilization, the caravan saw the new Illinois champion *Crataegus mollis* and learned the history of the surrounding Wayside Park, then had a quick impromptu photo op across the road at the grave of Lincoln's tutor, Mentor Graham, followed by a stop in front of Starhill Forest Arboretum to see (and in one case, to climb!) the champion *Catalpa speciosa* there. This would be our final stop in Menard County, but reentering Sangamon County we still had enough time to see the 1858 grove of native pecans (*Carya illinoensis*) at the historic Stone farm.

Over several months, I reluctantly culled about 15 wonderful places off of this agenda in order to have any chance of getting back to the hotel in time for the evening's events. I still would have bet that a long caravan full of non-local travelers like this would be slow enough, or get lost enough, that we would have to jettison a few more stops as time ran out. But these weren't ordinary people. These were plant people, focused on a mission, and we met Trish at the finish line with two minutes left! I tip my hat to our volunteer drivers and navigators, and I was so proud of our entire group, but so exhausted at the same time. Many new friends were made along the way, and I will always remember this day.



One of our team (Noah) in the champion northern catalpa with the historic schoolhouse in the background



9 *Carya illinoensis* 1858



## Field trip to Horn Prairie Grove Land and Water Reserve shared by Paul Marcum

A great group of ~20 native plant enthusiasts headed out from Springfield to meet our trip leader Keith Horn at a vacant lot in Ramsey, Illinois. From there it was just a short drive to Keith's amazing site. Once at the prairie we were greeted by retired IDNR plant ecologist Bill McLain, one of Illinois' very best botanists. Bill has studied the Illinois flora for 50+ years and has been conducting vegetation surveys at Horn Prairie during the last several years. During this time, he has documented a little over 600 species at the ~30-acre Horn Prairie.

While hiking through woodlands and seeps and wet to dry-mesic prairie we talked about plant ecology and plant identification, especially noting the great diversity of late season wildflowers. Despite the ongoing drought, many asters and goldenrods were in tremendous bloom. In all, we saw seven different aster species and about as many goldenrods! Along the way we were also treated to two different gentian species, a prickly pear cactus native to central Illinois, countless insects buzzing or floating by, the cutest little gray treefrog that hopped out of a cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*) cup right in front of many of us, the show stopping American Burnet (*Sanguisorba canadensis*), an Illinois endangered species, and so much more. This trip was a great pre-cursor to Dr. Doug Tallamy's presentation later that evening. We observed firsthand the importance of native plant species, not just as beautiful things for us to gaze upon, but as important pieces in our interconnected world. It was so great sharing that with so many likeminded folks. Plants are beautiful! Plants are important for pollinators! Plants are food for countless animals, whether they are birds, insects, or mammals! Plants utilize fungi! Plants have complex and interconnected lives! Plants are amazing!

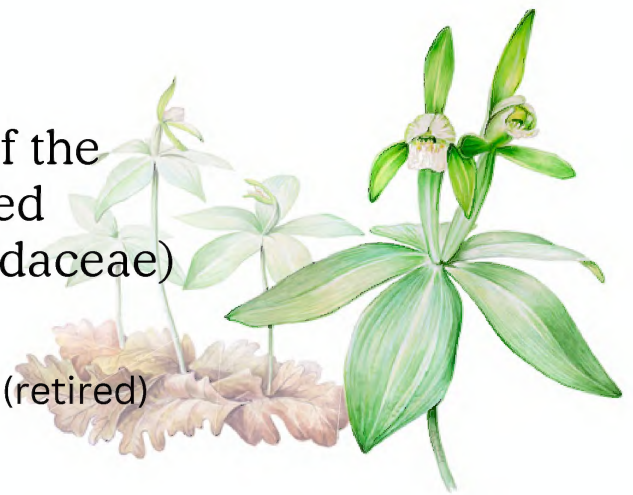


Above: *Gentiana andrewsii* (bottle gentian), photo by Paul Marcum. Upper right: field participants at Horn Prairie Grove. Bottom right: group photo by Keith Horn.



# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Discovery of the Federally Threatened Small Whorled Pogonia, *Isotria medeoloides* (Orchidaceae) in Illinois – A Recollection

By Michael Homoya, Indiana State Botanist (retired)



In 1973, a highly unexpected discovery was made in Illinois of one of North America's rarest orchids, the small whorled Pogonia, *Isotria medeoloides*. At that time, there were just two other known occurrences of the species in the Midwest, in Michigan and Missouri. Julius Swayne of Herrin, Illinois, and Loyal Mehrhoff and I of Carterville, had the good fortune of discovering the Illinois population. Here's the back story of that momentous occasion as I remember it.

Julius Swayne, a friend and botanical mentor of mine, was for several years an instructor at Rend Lake College in Ina, Illinois. He had a long history in field botany beginning as a student at Southern Illinois University. He often collected with William Bailey, a professor and first Chairman of the SIU Botany Department, the latter coming into existence in 1929. Many of the specimens from the 1940s-50s housed at the SIU herbarium have the label of "W.M. Bailey and J. R. Swayne." Julius also was co-author with Dr. John Voigt on an important paper about *Dodecatheon (Primula) frenchii* that helped justify it as a distinct species (Voigt and Swayne 1955). After a long span of teaching at Herrin High School and then while teaching at Rend Lake College, Julius earned his PhD from SIU (see Swayne 1973).

In 1973 a student at Rend Lake College told Julius that a family member of his owned property in Randolph County consisting of rugged hills and cliffs. Julius was invited to explore it, and on a Saturday afternoon in October 1973 he and I made the trek along with a friend of mine, Loyal Mehrhoff. Loyal was still in high school and while fairly new to botany he had already developed a keen knowledge of the native flora, especially orchids.

From upper right, clockwise:

*Isotria medeoloides* illustrated by Kathleen Marie Garness.

*I. medeoloides* collected in 1973 by the author and colleagues in Randolph County, Illinois.

*I. medeoloides* observed in the state of Georgia in 2014 by Andrew Lane Gibson, next to a nickel for size. (Photo by Andrew Lane Gibson, CC BY-NC)





The property we visited was as advertised, replete with steep forested slopes and sandstone cliffs. After inspecting the cliff ledges, we made our way to the upper slopes. We didn't note anything particularly special, at least not until Loyal made his way over to Julius and me with something to show us. "What do you think of this?" he exclaimed. In his hand was a tan-colored stalk bearing a pair of capsules at its apex. Loyal knew the capsule shape was typical of an orchid. But which species?

Collectively we first entertained an uncommon form of yellow lady's-slipper *Cypripedium parviflorum* var. *pubescens*, or possibly a partially broken stalk of puttyroot *Aplectrum hyemale*, but those choices just didn't seem right. Yes, sometimes lady's-slipper individuals have two flowers (and potentially two capsules), but each is typically positioned separately on long stalks. Capsules on this stem were adjacent to each other on short pedicels. We noted broken leaf bases positioned in a whorl immediately below the capsules. Additional searching revealed another plant with the whorl of dried leaves still intact. These observations directed our thinking to *Isotria*. While none of us had previously seen an *Isotria* species in life (or even a pressed specimen for that matter), we had seen illustrations and photos of it in various botanical works. But with two capsules? Most of the pictures we'd seen were of *Isotria verticillata*, depicted with a single flower. But we then recalled Steyermark's Flora of Missouri treatment of *Isotria*, and that there was a smaller-sized whorled pogonia named *I. medeoloides* which commonly possesses two flowers (Steyermark 1963). The idea that our plant could be that species was almost beyond belief, but we remembered the Missouri occurrence was in southeast Missouri (we later learned it was in Bollinger County, Missouri, a mere 40 miles away). So perhaps our plant being *I. medeoloides* was a real possibility.

To confirm our determination, we had the specimens checked by Dr. Robert Mohlenbrock, Chairman of the Botany Department at SIU, and Charles Sheviak, a grad student at Harvard University who was completing a publication on the ecology of Illinois Orchidaceae (Sheviak 1974). Both identified it as *Isotria medeoloides*.



Photos of *Isotria medeoloides* taken in 1974 at the Randolph County site by Michael Homoya.



Fast forward to mid-May of the following year when we, including Dr. Mohlenbrock and John Schwegman, a botanist with the Illinois Department of Conservation, observed the plants in bloom. There was no doubt it was *Isotria medeoloides*. The discovery led to several years of further observation and studies. I conducted research on the Illinois populations of it and *I. verticillata* for a Master's degree at SIU (Homoya 1977), and Loyal got his Master's degree (Mehrhoff 1980) at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill focusing on reproductive biology of the genus range wide, and later published on its pollination biology (Mehrhoff 1983). Additionally, a treatment of the genus was done by us together (Mehrhoff and Homoya 2002).

Schwegman and Swayne monitored *Isotria medeoloides* at the site for several years post discovery, with the last plant known to exist being observed in 1991. The reader is encouraged to see results of that monitoring (Schwegman 1995).

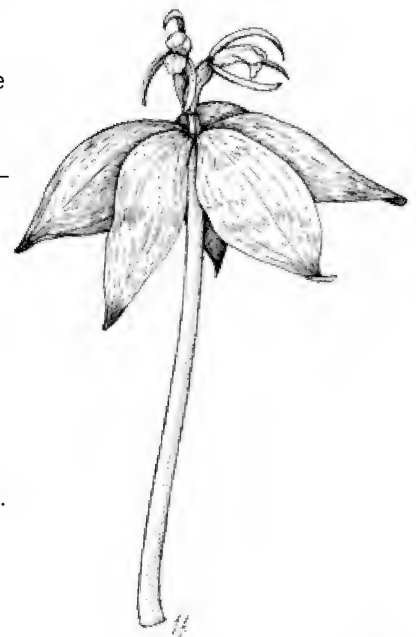
Now 50 years since our discovery I am still amazed that it happened, and I wonder, is the species still present in Illinois or the Midwest? Seemingly ample suitable habitat exists in southern Illinois, and other areas in Illinois may harbor it as well, including the Chicago region, as *Isotria medeoloides* formerly occurred only about 50 miles away in Berrien County, Michigan. The closest currently known site for an extant occurrence of the species to the Randolph County site is in Tennessee, approximately 275 miles away (McCoy 2023). The odds of finding it anywhere in Illinois seem astronomical, but then again ... perhaps serendipity will strike again.

Mike can be reached at [michaelhomoya@gmail.com](mailto:michaelhomoya@gmail.com).

## Literature Cited

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Right: *I. medeoloides* illustrated by Tess Feltes for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.





# Illinois Native Plant Society Botanizes Mississippi Palisades

By Grant Fessler, INPS Quad Cities Chapter Treasurer



Samantha Chavez (QC Chapter) and Gretel Kiefer (State Board) inspect a sedge (*Carex* sp.) at Mississippi Palisades State Park. Photo courtesy of Adriana McBride (QC Chapter).

On the morning of Saturday, June 24, native plant enthusiasts from across Illinois convened at the beautiful Mississippi Palisades State Park for a day of botanizing. Located in the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division, the hilly, deeply dissected terrain of the Mississippi Palisades contains numerous rare plants and animals, some of which are seldom seen elsewhere in the state. Our group of eight, which comprised members from the Northeast, Kankakee Torrent, Quad Cities, and Forest Glen chapters, was eager to explore this rich natural area!

Our day began at Oak Point atop the towering limestone river bluffs. A short stroll from the parking lot through oak woodland habitat brought us to an overlook at the bluff edge. Out before us, a magnificent vista stretched for miles. Two-hundred feet below, islands, marshes, and open water populated the broad river valley. Peering west, we could see the opposing wooded bluffs in Iowa lining the horizon.





From Left to right: Grant Fessler (QC Chapter), Daniel Pohl (State Board), Paul Marcum (Forest Glen Chapter), Gretel Kiefer, and Samantha Chavez botanize a driftless goat prairie. Photo courtesy of Adriana McBride.

On the dry, exposed slope below us was a remnant hill prairie — or “goat prairie” as it is often called in the Driftless. It did not take long for us botanists to descend to this unique plant community! Our eyes re-focused from the macro-views of the river valley to stems of Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*), Spreading Dogbane (*Apocynum androsaemifolium*), Ebony Sedge (*Carex eburnea*), Flowering Spurge (*Euphorbia corollata*), and Porcupine Needle Grass (*Hesperostipa spartea*). One of our goals for the day was to update the plant list for the park. Many of us listed off plant names while a couple folks jotted them down and cross-checked the old list.

Once we felt satisfied with the hill prairie, we turned our attention to the wooded bluffs. We were excited to see Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*) and feasted on its delicious ripe fruits! Further exploration yielded Red Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*), many sedges (*Carex* spp.), Jeweled Shooting Star (*Dodecatheon amethystinum*), Interrupted Fern (*Osmunda claytoniana*), and Prickly Gooseberry (*Ribes cynosbati*). We also had the pleasure of getting to see three different species of Sanicula side by side. In addition to the two common species of Northern Illinois, Canada Black Snakeroot (*S. canadensis*) and Clustered Black Snakeroot (*S. odorata*), we located the more conservative Large-fruited Sanicle (*S. trifoliata*).





The brilliant red fruits of Red Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*).  
Photo courtesy of Adriana McBride.



Three species of *Sanicula*. From left to right: *S. trifoliata*, *S. canadensis*, *S. odorata*. Photo by G. Fessler.

After lunch, our group descended from the bluffs into a deep, rocky valley where the trail to Sentinel Nature Preserve begins. As we climbed the steep trail to the blufftop, we encountered many amazing plants of rich, rocky woods. In particular, ferns abounded! Bulblet Fern (*Cystopteris bulbifera*), Silvery Glade Fern (*Deparia acrostichoides*), Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*), and Broad Beech Fern (*Phegopteris hexagonoptera*) were some of the highlights.

Approaching the crest of the bluff ridge, the Sugar Maple - Red Oak - Basswood forest of the lower to middle slopes gradually transitioned into dry-mesic White Oak woodland. Once again we were greeted by a panoramic view of the river valley. Growing on the dry, west-facing limestone ledges, we found Smooth Cliff Brake Fern (*Pellaea glabella*), Fee's Lip Fern (*Myriopteris gracilis*), and Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*). Old, gnarled Red Cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) clung to the driest, sunniest cliff edges while the white trunks of Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) stood tall on cool, north-facing ledges. After exploring the Sentinel Nature Preserve, we made our way back to the parking lot and concluded our day of botanizing.

All in all, it was a fun day of exploring, learning, and appreciating our native flora in one of the more rugged parts of the Prairie State! We added many new plant species to the park's list, as well. Thanks to everyone for making the trip. A big thanks goes out to Daniel Pohl for planning, organizing, and leading this trip. Thank you to Paul Marcum for generously and enthusiastically sharing his expert plant knowledge. Can't wait for the next INPS outing!

Our group at Oak Point overlook. From left to right: Daniel Pohl, Gretel Kiefer, Samantha Chavez, Grant Fessler, Floyd Catchpole, Adriana McBride, Paul Marcum (Forest Glen Chapter), and Jean Mengelkoch (Forest Glen Chapter). Photo courtesy of Daniel Pohl.

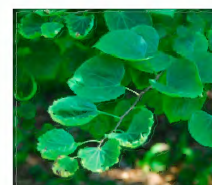




## Other News, Articles, Web Links, & Videos

From the May 2023 issue of *Outdoor Illinois Journal*, **read about how “Herbicide Drift Threatens Habitat Quality”**, an article by Kim Erndt-Pitcher and Martin Kemper.

This article covers signs of herbicide drift, herbicide drift impacts on plants, how to report drift and contribute to monitoring efforts, and includes a helpful Q&A section.



Available starting mid-November, **grab a copy of Angella Moorehouse’s new book, Flower Bugs: A Guide to Flower-Associated True Bugs of the Midwest**. Moorehouse is a Natural Areas Preservation Specialist with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission in western Illinois where she has focused intensely on photographing, identifying, and inventorying insects in natural areas. Her new book is a “ground-breaking field guide” that “provides a useful resource for citizen scientists and field biologists to study, identify, and appreciate true bugs in the Midwest.”

From the Fall 2023 issue of *Audubon* magazine, **read the article “Meet the Fire Starters Restoring One of North America’s Greatest Forests”** by Gabriel Popkin, which highlights the use of prescribed fire as a conservation tool protecting the health of longleaf pine forests and red-cockaded woodpeckers that live within them.



## Botany Humor

SORRY I CAN'T,  
I HAVE  
PLANTS  
THIS WEEKEND



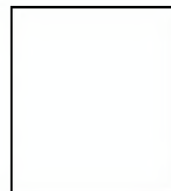




## ILLINOIS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 60694  
Chicago, IL 60660

[illinoisplants@gmail.com](mailto:illinoisplants@gmail.com)  
[www.illinoisplants.org](http://www.illinoisplants.org)



### The Harbinger Fall 2023

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|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central (Springfield)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Northeast (Chicago)       |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Grand Prairie (Bloomington) | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern (Carbondale)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kankakee Torrent            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other/Uncertain           |

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☐ My area of expertise: \_\_\_\_\_